

THANKSGIVING DAY.

The Annual Turkey Festival Dates Back to Colonial Times.

But the observance of it was only intermittent until 1861. The present observance suggested by a woman.

Washington, Nov. 10.—Every year at about this time the president of the United States issues a proclamation fixing "Thanksgiving Day," as it has come to be known. Every year the proclamation of the president is transmitted to the governors of the states and the day named by the president is set aside as a general holiday. Now it is a day of feasting and frolic and football games. Every good American is thankful that he is an American 365 days in the year—and one day extra in leap years. He does not need a special day set aside for rejoicing.

The making of the Thanksgiving Day proclamation is a serious duty for the president, for it is customary for him to write this proclamation with his own hand, and to put into it as much of the spirit of the day as possible. President Harrison used to take a pencil and a little pad of paper and write out the proclamation in full. Then he would turn it over to one of the executive clerks to be copied. Mr. Harrison preferred to use his pencil rather than to dictate. President Cleveland also wrote some things with his own hand, but he used a stenographer, too, a great deal.

The first draft of the proclamation is copied, and the copy is sent to the state department. There are two or three clerks in the state department who make a specialty of preparing one of these engrossers of the proclamation on parchment artistically. The parchment is sent back to the White House to receive the president's signature. When "Grover Cleveland" has been written at the bottom of it, it is taken back to the state department where "Walter Q. Gresham's" signature attests that of the president. Then the great seal of the state department is affixed. It is a very ornate seal. It ought to be for it was made by Tiffany, of New York, and it cost \$1,000. It is kept in a wooden case in the bureau of commissions and pardons, and its custodian, George Bartle, who has been in the department service for forty-seven years, Bartle was appointed to a clerkship by Daniel Webster. He is one of the oldest employees of the government at Washington.

It takes an order from the president of the United States to procure an impression of the great seal of state. Collectors of seals and autographs frequently write to the secretary of state for copies of the seal of state. The same formal reply is sent to all of them—that under the law no impressions of the seal can go out of the department unless they are affixed to official papers. The president of the United States could give authority to a collector to obtain an impression of the seal, but no president has ever done so. The law of 1879 says that the seal shall not be affixed to any instrument except a commission "without the special warrant of the president therefor." The president therefore, when he sends a Thanksgiving proclamation to the state department for the seal, sends with it a copy of the following printed form, duly filled out and signed:

I hereby authorize and direct the secretary of state to cause the seal of the United States to be affixed to the above dated this day and signed by me and for doing so this shall be his warrant.

When Mr. Bartle receives this order, he unlocks the wooden case, puts a scolded circle of paper in the press, and with a light turn of the heavy steel ball above, brings the seal down on the paper and leaves its impression there. Then the stamped piece of paper is fastened to the proclamation and it is ready to go to the world.

Bartle is very conscientious about the exercise of his duties toward the great seal and he has controversies not infrequently with people who are in a hurry for the seal, and who do not understand why the state department has not the authority under the general law to affix the great seal to any document bearing the president's signature.

When the proclamation has been completed by the addition of the seal, the clerks of the state department are set to work making copies for transmission to the governors of the states and territories. These copies are not made on typewriters or with manifold paper or on any other simple printer or by any other process of duplication. The state department uses the typewriter for some purposes, but not for official correspondence. All of the copies of the proclamation are written out on the long sheets of blue paper which are used for official correspondence. Each governor who receives a copy of the president's proclamation will make a proclamation of his own. But in the meantime the proclamation of the president has been made public and the people all over the country know what day has been chosen for "Thanksgiving."

There is no law providing a day for general thanksgiving. "Thanksgiving day" is a product of custom. The president could omit his "Thanksgiving" proclamation in any year; or he could fix the 7th of May or the 21st of December as the day for giving thanks. But it has come to be the custom for the president to issue a proclamation each year, naming, usually, the last Thursday in the month of November as Thanksgiving day. This custom dates back only to 1863. The first Thanksgiving day was celebrated at odd times as far back as the days of the colonies. Among the records preserved by Congress is a proclamation by the council of Massachusetts, dated November 16, 1776, recommending "acknowledgments for mercies enjoyed."

A form of thanksgiving proclamation was reported to the Continental Congress November 1, 1777, by Samuel Adams, of Massachusetts. It was Samuel Adams who urged the opening of Congress with prayer in opposition to John Jay, who said that Episcopallians, Presbyterians, etc., could hardly be expected to unite in formal worship. Adams' form of proclamation has not been observed since; for each proclamation follows the fancy of the president who writes it.

In November, 1778, the chaplain of Congress recommended that Wednesday, December 30, be observed as "a day of thanksgiving and praise"; so the Thursday in November has not been the inevitable day for this festival. In 1779, the first Tuesday in May was appointed as a day of thanksgiving, and this appointment was made by proclamation of the Continental Congress. This was an extra day of thanks, for in the following October Congressman Root reported in favor of appointing Thursday, December 9, as a day of thanksgiving. In 1782, the states were recommended (on report of Congressman Witherspoon) to appoint November 25 as a day of thanksgiving.

For a great many years the custom of observing Thanksgiving day fell into disrepute. Then the editor of a woman's paper took the matter up. Her name was Sarah Josepha Hale and she lived in Philadelphia until her death fourteen years ago. She suggested a movement to raise \$20,000 to complete the Bunker Hill monument. It was successful. Then she began to manufacture public sentiment in favor of an annual observance of Thanksgiving day. She interested President Lincoln, and in 1863 he adopted her suggestion and issued a proclamation for a day of thanksgiving.

ing. The custom has come unchanged down to the present day. The first Thanksgiving day proclamation ever issued by a president was signed by George Washington in 1789. The original is in the possession of Rev. J. W. Wellman, who inherited it from his grandfather, William Ripley, of Cornish, N. H. This proclamation was issued by request of both houses of Congress through their joint committee. The text of the proclamation, following the preamble, is:

Now therefore, I do recommend and assign Thursday, the 30th day of November next to be devoted by the people of these states, to the service of that great and glorious being, who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be: That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks for his kind care and protection of the people of this country; previous to their becoming a nation; for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his providence, in the course and conclusion of the late war; for the great degree of tranquility, union and plenty, which we have since enjoyed; for the peaceable and rational manner in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national one now lately instituted; for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed, and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

And also, that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and ruler of nations, and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions; to enable us all, whether public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually; to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a government of wise, just and constitutional laws, directly and faithfully executed; and to protect and guide all our sovereigns and nations, (especially such as have shown kindness to us,) and to bless them with good government, peace and concord; to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the increase of science among them and us; and generally to grant unto all mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.

Give me under my hand, at the city of New York, the third day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine.

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

The thanksgiving proclamations issued since the time of "G. Washington" have usually been less elaborate. There is no special observance of the day at the capital except the occasional services in the churches. It is altogether likely that President Cleveland will be fishing or shooting on Thanksgiving day this year. If he is not, the traditional turkey with cranberry sauce will be served at the White House table, possibly to a few guests as well as to the president and his family. The cabinet people usually eat their Thanksgiving dinner by their own firesides. If they feel any special occasion for giving thanks they do not show it.

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